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V CORPS' 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION WORKS WITH IRAQIS TO REPAIR, UPGRADE POWER PLANT COMPLEX IN BAYJI

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BAYJI, Iraq — As part of its efforts to bolster the security and economy of northern Iraq, members of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division partnered with civilian companies and the Army Corps of Engineers to repair this city's power plant complex.

The facility, which is comprised of three power plants, once generated 1,300 megawatts of power. But after Operation Desert Storm, sanctions levied against Irai prevented officials from getting parts to maintain the plants.

The three plants were generating a little less than 400 megawatts of power prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Since then, coalition forces have worked diligently to repair the complex, which was one of the major power sources in the nation. In August, it was generating about 800 megawatts of power, said Capt. David Unger, electricity adviser with the 415th Civil Affairs Battalion.

The complex produces power for hospitals, schools, factories and thousands of homes, explained Maj. Daren Payne of the Army Corp of Engineers.

"This is breathing life in all of Iraq," he said.

"It (the power plant project) tremendously helps the local economy. Almost all the contractors are local," added Daniel Juracek, a civilian construction representative for the Corps of Engineers.

In addition, the plant employs 2,000 Iraqis, 1,200 of which are permanent staff, said Unger.

As of August, the 1st Infantry Division had spent more than \$1 million on parts for the plant. Aside from repairs to the 500-acre complex, security was a major issue. Its fence had gaping holes that serve as a gateway for looters who frequently stole equipment and supplies, Unger said.

To remedy that problem, the division spent \$450,000 to build a 12-foot-high wall around the entire complex. That project alone created more than 700 local jobs, as six different contractors who submitted the lowest bids worked on the wall simultaneously, Unger said.

There are also additional plans to build guard towers and fire equipment, he explained.

The division also implemented an identification card system for workers; built them a health center on the complex, and plans to refurbish the local sewage system. The latter two projects will cost a combined \$360,000, Unger said.

"We know that if the workers are healthy, they will want to come to work," he said.

Basin Al Janabi, the plant's assistant director general, said the work the Army has done on the plant is invaluable. But he added that more still needs to be done.

The plant is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2005, Payne said.

